

A

Specimen of a BILL, FOR UNITING THE PROTESTANTS:

B E I N G

A rough draught of such Terms, as seem equal for the *Conformist* to grant, and the *Non-conformist* to yield to, for peace sake; Provided a good while, and published thus by it self, on purpose only for the farther, better, and more easy consideration of the *Parliament*.

WHereas there are many Jealousies risen about *Papery*, which makes it even necessary to the Peace of the Nation, that the *Protestant* Interest be united and strengthened by all good and lawful Means: And to this end, there being this one proper Expedient, to wit, the removing the Occasion of Divisions, which several Persons do find to themselves in those late *Injunctions*, which yet were intended to the same purpose of Concord in the Nation: Be it Enacted, ——— That an Explanation of these Impositions, and such Alleviations, be allowed to the tenderly Considerate, and peaceably Scrupulous, as follow.

In the *Act of Uniformity*, By the Declaration of Assent and Consent to all things, and every Thing contained in, and prescribed by the Two Books of Common-Prayer, and of Ordering Priests and Deacons, we understand not, that these Books are in every Minute particular, infallible, or free from that Defect, which is incident to all Human Composure: but that they are in the main Contents, to be sincerely approved and used. And we do therefore allow this Declaration to be sufficient, if it be made to the use of the Book, in the *Ordinary Constant Lords Day Service*, notwithstanding any Exceptions some may have against some Things in the *By-Offices*, and *Occasional Service*, the *Rubrick*, and otherwise. And for the Ceremonies which are made, and have been always, and on all hands, held to be only indifferent Things, we think fit that they be left to the Consciences and Prudence of Ministers, and People, every where (excepting the *Cathedrals*) to use them, or forbear them, as they judge it most meet for their own and others Edification. Provided, that if any Person will have his Child Baptised with the Sign of the *Cross*, or stands upon any thing else, hitherto required by the Service-Book, if the Minister himself scruple the Performance, he shall permit another to do it.

These Materials were provided, during the sitting of that Parliament which passed the Act of Uniformity, and other the like Rigorous Acts; and were therefore drawn up in the form of an Explanatory Bill, because it was supposed, they were not like to Repeal their own Acts, though they might be got to Interpret them. But now we have a New Parliament, and that after another also Dissolved, we may expect quicker Work: As will the Proposing these Things still to view, have their use, both for suppressing such as have said, The Nonconformists know not what they would have; and setting some Measure to our own desires, and the Parliaments Condescensions about the same.

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In the same Act, By those Words in the Subscription, that *it is not lawful to take Arms against the King, upon any Pretence whatsoever*; we intend no new or strange

That we have our Reason for these Interpretations, any one may see that pleats in 1680 Arguments against the Oxford Oath, and this Subscription which are offered in a little Book Entituled The Peaceable Design; so that we can by no means submit thereto, without them. There is moreover this Clause [And I will conform to the Liturgy of the Church, as it is by Law Established] we desire may be spared, because upon our Declaration before of assent and consent, (which must be the Bounds of our Sense thereof) it is needless altogether, and can serve but for a Snare only to Mens Consciences.

Thing, but the rightful Maintenance only of the Kings Authority against Rebellion, according to the common Determination of Learned Writers, in the Case of Subjection to Princes. By the Words, *I abhor the Position of taking Arms by the Authority of the King, against any Commissioned by him*, we never thought of Advancing the Arbitrary Commissions of the King, above Law; but by those Commissioned by him, we under-

stand such as are Legally Commissioned, and in the Legal Pursuit of such Commissions. By the Clause which follows, that requires a Renunciation of all *Endeavour of any Alteration of Government in the Church or State*, we never meant to deny any Free-Born Subject his Right, of choosing *Parliament Men* or Acting in his Place for the Common good any way, according to Law; but that he shall Renounce all such Endeavour, as is Seditious, or not warranted by the Constitution of the Nation; and particularly, such an Endeavour as was Assumed in the late Times, without, and against the Consent of the King: And for the rest of the Subscription, which is enjoyed but to the Year 1682. Be it enacted, that it cease presently, and be no longer enjoyed.

And forasmuch as there is an Oath prescribed and required of all Non-conformists Preachers, that Reside in any Corporate-Town, by a certain Act of the former Parliament, made at Oxford in the 17th. Year of His now Majesties Reign, Entituled, *An Act for restraining Non-conformists, from inhabiting Corporations*: We

This Oath is of the same Contents with the Subscription before; and so to purpose both; is nothing else but the multiplying Wrath, and laying Lead on the already Laden.

do further declare, That it shall suffice any Man, for the Enjoyment of his Free born Liberty, of Inhabiting where he thinks best; and serve him also instead of the fore-men-

tioned Subscription; to take that Oath in this Form of Words following: *I A. B. do swear, That I hold it unlawful upon any Pretence, to take Arms against the King, his Government, or Laws: And that I disclaim that dangerous Position; of taking Arms by his Authority, against His Person, or any Legally Commissioned by him, in the Legal pursuit of such Commissions: And that I will not endeavour any Alteration of Government in the Church or State, in any way or manner, not warranted by the Constitution of the Kingdom, or any otherwise than by Act of Parliament.* And as soon as any Man hath taken the Oath thus, he shall be discharged of all Penalty for his Omission before.

We do declare moreover, That whereas it is required also in the Act of Uniformity, that every Minister who enjoys any Living, or Ecclesiastical Preferment, shall be Ordained by a Bishop; and there are several persons of late, who in case of Necessity, for want of Bishops took Presbyterian Orders: Our Meaning is not in any wise to disgust the Reformed Churches beyond the Seas, and make it necessary for such to be Re-ordained to the Office; but that they receive this Second Imposition of Hands to the Exercise of their Office in the new Charge, unto which they are, or shall be called; and that the Bishop shall frame his words accordingly.

There is Reordination ad Officium, which (we say) is generally derog'd by Divines: Re-ordination ad Exercitium particulare, which may be irrefragably proved from Acts 13. 2, 3, with Acts 14. 26. and consequently shew'd to serve this Occasion.

And whereas there is a Subscription also in the Canons, and the Canonical-Oath of Obedience, imposed on most Ministers by the Bishops, that have given some of the

the greatest Occasion to Non-conformity heretofore; which yet never passed into Law by any Act of Parliament: We do further declare, That nothing more of that kind shall be required of Ministers henceforward, then was made and held necessary, by the Act of the thirteenth of Elizabeth.

who fear God, out of the Vineyard, to be so good a Thing for her, that our Wise Church of England should use so much Care and Industry as She takes, that She may not miss to do it.

And in regard there hath been, great Offence taken by Conscientious Ministers, at the Bishops, (or their Courts) commanding them to read the Sentence of Excommunication against some or other of their Parish, for such Faults as they think not at all worthy of so great a Censure: We declare it but a just Thing, that every Minister be first satisfied in the Cause, or else be exempted from the Execution of that Charge; and that the Bishop (or his Court) provide some other person that is satisfied about it, to do it.

*such as have the power both to Rule and Teach, committed to them by Christ: Yet do we for all that, apprehend is not only Lawful, but Expedient, for the ordinary Ministers of our Parochial Congregations, (when the Church is National) to commit part of their charge, (to wit, that of Ruling) in Actu Secundo, to some few among them; who are more Eminently fitted for the Work, (that is, the *ὡς καλὸς ἡγεμὼν*) and consequently to the Bishop: So that, if this Fundamental Right of Governing their own Flocks, be but acknowledged to Reside in every Presbyter, by granting so much to us as this (and what hath preceded) comes to, we shall be unwilling to fall off from Episcopacy, upon the points of Ordination and Jurisdiction.*

And to the intent, that a free Search after Truth may not be discouraged in the Pursuit of Concord, and many other Scruples avoided upon that Account: We declare, That though an Authentick Interpretation be required, as to the Substance of all Laws, yet in the Articles of the Church, (which are *Theses* for Agreement, and not Laws) and the Homilies, a Doctrinal Interpretation shall be held sufficient for an Assent or Subscription to them.

The Authentick Interpretation of an Article, is the meaning of the Major Part of the Convocation: A Doctrinal Interpretation, is the meaning of any one of the Doctors there present, (and consequently of any other Learned Expositor) who are supposed to have the Liberty to abound in their own Sense, so long as they can agree in the Words of the Article Established. And this Clause therefore we put in upon Mature Consideration, in regard more especially to the Conscientious Latitudinarians, (which is a Name abused) who being some Arminian, and some Calvinian, cannot otherwise Subscribe the Doctrine of the same Thesis, as the Reader may see more in such a sort of Book as this, called The Healing Paper, out of which this Bill for Union is Collected.

And because the very Superintendency of Bishops, and that Subjection to them which is required by the Constitution of the Realm, is or may be an Hinderance to many sober Ministers, and other Protestants, of coming into the Church, who are ready to consent to the Doctrine, but not to the Discipline or Government of it: We do declare, That so long as any Person or Party do acknowledge the King's Supremacy, as Head of the Church in this Nation, and obey their Ordinary, or the Bishops, in *Licetis & Honestis*, upon the Account of his Authority (committed to them for the Exercise of that External Regiment *Circa Sacra* which is granted by all our Divines, to the Higher Powers in every Nation,) it is enough for the owning Episcopal Jurisdiction (so far as they do own it, in the Declaration of Assent and Consent, or in any other Part of Conformity,) and shall serve them to all Intents and Purposes in Law, no less than a professed Belief and Acknowledgment of the immediate Divine Right of it.

If the Oath of Supremacy and Allegiance be taken, and the Articles of the Church subscribed, and the Declaration before to the Common Prayer made; we see no need of boyling over these three Things again for us, in the Canons, unless it be for a Crambe Repetita, on purpose to Kill us. Neither do we think the putting any House-Men

Neither shall any Minister be punishable for the withholding his own Act in delivery of either Sacrament to any, who in his Conscience he judges unworthy, or incapable of it. As we think, there is no Elder in the New Testament, who is not a Pastor, and that there is no Lay Pastor; so do we account, that there is no Pastor or Presbyter, but

That is, Although there be some that cannot acknowledge our Diocesan Prelates to be Christ's Officers, distinct from the Elders in Scripture; Yet so long as they can live Peaceable lives, in Obedience to them, as Ecclesiastical Magistrates under His Majesty, for the keeping the several Congregations, in their Precincts, to that Gospel Order, which themselves allow, and for super-vising their constitutions in Things indifferent, that nothing be done, but in Subordination to the Peace of the Kingdom, (which is a Notion wherein the Judicious of every Party may acquiesce, and expressed by us in these very words in a Book for- named) it is sufficient unto National Church

Union, as was said in the beginning

Be it therefore Enacted by this Present Parliament, That if any Person be willing to Conform to the Present Establishment of the Church of England, and her Service appointed according to these Explanations, Alleviations, Declarations, Lenitives, or Cautions, he shall be admitted to any Ecclesiastical Preferment, and enjoy the use of his Ministry without any Molestation: All Statutes, Canons, or Laws to the contrary notwithstanding.

And for the making this Act of better Signification to the Concerned, and the Prevention of that Scandal which is raised on the Clergy, through the Covetousness of some, in heaping up to themselves all the Preferments they can get, when others have scarce Subsistence for their Families, and the Souls of many People are thereby neglected: Be it farther Enacted, That no

We propose these Things, we confess, as if we were in Republica Platonis, but we should be glad to see any Fruits of this kind, as those who are in Ecce Romuli may expect. What is Right and Just, and ought to be done, is one thing, and to be fought; though what is like to be done, or will be done, is another.

Clergy-man for the Three next Years ensuing, be suffered to Enjoy any more than one Living or Cure of Souls, and one Dignity, (or other Ecclesiastical Preferment) at one Time; and that every Man (without Exception) that hath more than One of Either, shall immediately give up the Rest to be distributed among those who shall be brought off from their Non-conformity, upon the Terms of this Act into the Established Order. Which that they may also be obtained, and possessed with a clean Conscience, and that grievous Corruption of Simony may be extirpate out of the Land: Be it Enacted moreover, That every Patron that shall henceforward present his Clerk to any Living, shall have the Oath called *The Simonical Oath*, imposed on himself, no less than on the Incumbent: And if he Refuses to take it, that then the Bishop shall have immediate Power (taking only the same Oath) of Presentation in his Room.

And so far as much, as there are some Ministers of a good Life, that cannot (according to their Judgments) allow of our Parochial Churches, nor a Book of *Liturgy*: but do choose to Worship God, and Jesus Christ, in the way of their Gathered or Separate Congregations; and

There are two parts of this Bill; One for Concord or Communion with all such as can joyn in Parochial Communion, in the Clauses before: The other for Forbearance of those that cannot, in this last clause. For, what shall we do with such? We must not knock them on the Head: They must therefore have Time. If the Parliament will begin with the last first, that is, a Suspension of the Penal Statutes, and then let us treat for a composition after, we consent with all our Hearts, and like the Arabad best. Then Abner called unto Joab, and said, Shall the Sword devour for ever! Knowest thou not, that it will be Bitterness in the end! How long shall it be, ere thou bid the People return from following of their Brethren.

** Until by a further Act of Parliament, or a Convocation, those that are fit to be Tolerated, and the Intolerable be distinguished.*

crave the Protection and Clemency of the King, upon their Allegiance, as others Subjects: Be it finally Enacted, for the Happiness and quiet of the Realm, and the Reduction of these Men by other means than those which have hitherto proved unsuccessful, That every Christian Subject throughout the Land that profess the Reformed Religion, and be not Convict of Popery, be pardoned all Faults and Penalties, incurred upon the Account of any Fore-past Non-conformity; and that they shall not, * during these Seven Years next ensuing, be prosecuted upon any Penal Law for their Consciences, in the Matter of Religion; They carrying themselves Innocently and Peaceably, with Submission to the Civil, and without Disturbance to the Ecclesiastical Government, now settled in the Nation: All statutes to the contrary notwithstanding.

In Short.

A Repeal of all our Laws about Conformity unto the 13th. of Elizabeth, Or, A New Act of Uniformity, Or, The Kings Declaration concerning Ecclesiastical Affairs at His first Coming in, turn'd into a Law, were *Comprehension*.

His latter Declaration to all his Loving Subjects (some few Things in Both yet a little considered) made so, were *Indulgence*.

A Bill for *Comprehension* with *Indulgence*, both together, will do our Business. An Addition, or Clause in it, against *Pluralities*, will do it with *Supererogation*.

Deo Gloria.

ADVERTISEMENT.

This Sheet is one of a dozen, Entitled a Peaceable Resolution of Conscience, touching our present Impositions.

Printed for Richard Janney, in Queens-Head Alley in Paternoster-Row.

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Coolidge Fund
November 24 1950

